2018 All-Star Community Award Application

City: Le Mars

Title of Project: Downtown 2nd Level Housing

City's Population: 9826

In a few sentences, give a summary of the project and why it was needed:

Le Mars completed a $1M Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) which renovated 27 downtown building facades in 2015. The Claussen’s Project was the next step in the community’s efforts in revitalizing the downtown district. The goal is to add upscale loft style housing to the second level of downtown Le Mars businesses while retaining key historical features. Recent housing statistics showed a lack of housing within our community. The biggest issue affecting the current housing market in Le Mars is the relative scarcity of housing due to increased workforce demand. The Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council (SIMPCO) was engaged by the City of Le Mars in 2015 to provide a comprehensive assessment of housing needs for the City. Local industry projects they could hire an additional 400+ employees if affordable housing was available. The study encouraged the development of additional rental options by using underutilized spaces. Renovating upper floors of downtown businesses will open up additional affordable units. The renovation of the Claussen’s building was chosen to maximize the impact on the Main Street District’s goals. It showcased the positive benefits of residential occupancy and improved the ambiance of our downtown.

Explain the specific role of your city in this project:

The City, recognizing the benefit of the project in expanding the tax base, addressing a housing shortage, and revitalizing the downtown, granted Mr. Claussen $25,000. The Code Enforcement Department was responsible for ensuring the construction work was performed to building standards. The Le Mars Fire Chief reviewed/approved the submitted plans and conducted inspections during construction to verify compliance with current fire code requirements.

In a few sentences, what future impact will this project have on your community?

Development of second floor living will offer additional opportunities that encourage increased community involvement, a stronger sense of community history and cultural activities, economic development and enhanced work forces. This will also impact tourism, cultural experiences and recruitment of new businesses. A downtown’s appearance is imperative for maintaining a vibrant business center. Much effort has been put in to educating downtown building owners of the positive factors of renovating their second floors into housing. The benefit for the owner is increased income and possible tax credits. For the City, benefits include tax roll growth, health of the downtown district and additional opportunities for housing.

Total cost of project: $179,000.00
List where funding came from. (grants, donations, city funds, etc):

Challenge Grant - $75,000.00 / City of Le Mars Grant - $25,000.00 / Claussen's - $79,000.00

Total time project took/projected to take for completion. Please include start date and end date. (To qualify the project must be operating or completed between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017):

Fall of 2016 - October 2017

Resources. (Please list Web sites judges may reference if they seek additional information.):

http://www.lemarssentinel.com/story/2365054.html